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*"Providers of Quality, Dependable Bus Transportation"*

April 27, 2005

Michigan House of Representatives  
Transportation Committee  
Rep. Philip LaJoy, Chairman  
PO Box 30014  
Lansing, MI 48909-7514

RE: 4/14/2005 Transportation Testimony on 5-year plan

Mr. Chairman:

As indicated in my verbal testimony to you on 4/14/05 in Cadillac, I mentioned I would send a written transcript.

I appreciated the fact that your committee is reaching out to all geographic areas of Michigan to gain input from the providers of mass transit and its customers. I make myself available to any process that will enhance delivery of our service to the customer.

The Clare County Transit Corp. serves Clare County with a population of approx. 31,600. This represents 17.3% seniors, 23% handicapped and 16% below poverty level. All three of these categories are higher than the state average.

Total rider ship for 2003-2004 was 145,865, meaning we moved our total population 5 times. 15,046 seniors: 58,215 handicapped: 6,820 senior/handicapped: 65,784 adult and children. This breaks down to about 400 people per day doing normal activities such as doctor's appointments, shopping and work. In other words, the normal way of life for most people.

Our state funding continues to be cut every year. This year we are losing approx. \$68,000. This means no expansion plans and in all probability may have to cut service to the people that can least afford it. I know of transits that have raised their fares only to have their rider ship decline because the poor cannot afford it.

Personally, I would like to see some new thinking in regards to helping mass transit to become more viable to more people.

- First, we must restore funding to transits and make it a known quantity that will not change from year to year.

- Letting local transit do charter opportunities that the “charter” companies don’t want to compete in or are too pricey. This also means to streamline the notification process in order to take advantage of these opportunities.
- The restrictions regarding mass transit being able to transport school children must be modified. It will only be a matter of time before this has to happen because of school bus funding being continually cut to the schools.  
One strange restriction is if public transportation is used for school children all the school buses have to be repainted and take the flashers off. Now how many years has it been drilled into everyone’s brain that when you see a yellow bus, it has children on it. Why would you change that? There are more examples but items like this must be changed in order for mass transit to be able to transport school kids safely.

Again, it was an honor to speak before you and the committee to better help you understand the plight of rural Americans who rely on public transportation for their way of life. Please let me know if I can be of further assistance.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Thomas Pirnstill". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Thomas" being more legible than the last name "Pirnstill".

Tom Pirnstill  
Executive Director